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ABSTRACT

Most parents do everything they can to facilitate the health and happiness, growth and development of their children. Nevertheless, Western society leaves parents the responsibility for children's well-being, but does not empower parents to ensure that well-being. This book takes the position that our society is inimical to children and has devalued parents to the point that individual good parenting has become not only exceedingly difficult, but ultimately insufficient. Specific steps by which members of society can move to fashion a new social and economic priority for all children are discussed. The book is divided into three parts: Part 1 covers parents and society; Part 2, children and parents; and Part 3, putting children first. The chapters are: (1) "People, Profits and Parenting," on the tension between the need for financial solvency and the desire to be good parents, and on the changing characteristics of Western families; (2) "Mother, Father or Parent?" on the biology of gender roles; (3) "Getting Started," on the impact of social attitudes on infant care and bonding; (4) "Daycare: Dreams and Nightmares," on the increasingly complex child care debate; (5) "Growing Up Takes Time," on social pressures that make parenting competitive at the expense of the child's development; (6) "Discipline, Self-Discipline and Learning How To Behave," including the confusion over the intended ends of discipline, corporal punishment, and the power play implicit in disciplining a dependent; (7) "The Preschool Years: Learning and Lessons, Education and School," on facilitating early childhood development and learning processes, and the nature of preschools; (8) "7-Up: The Years We Ignore," on why we fail to capitalize on the learning and moral development opportunities of children's middle years; (9) "New Approaches to Poverty and Privilege," on bottom-up socioeconomic policies that would have their first and most obvious impact on the poor and which put children and families first; (10) "New Approaches to Human Rights for Children," on the concept of children as

autonomous beings separate from ourselves--socially, politically, legally, and physically; (11) "New Approaches to Working and Caring," on changing the workplace to better balance employment and parenting; and (12) "New Approaches to Practical Parenting," on improving preparation for parenthood, changing the face of daycare, and moving work into the home. (HTH)

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